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# Narrowing the Dissemination Gap: Genres for Practitioner Scholarship

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#### EDITORIAL NOTE

This editorial is motivated by our joint experience of launching the *Engaged Management ReView (EMR)*. The gestation of this journal has involved three years of planning, socializing, and garnering lessons about practitioner scholarship. What we found during this period was the lack of a shared understanding about how to balance simultaneously the needs of academic and practitioner knowledge dissemination. So far, we have seen a strong tendency among all reviewers—regardless of whether they are faculty members or alumni of executive doctoral programs—to treat *EMR* as a traditional academic outlet. Our vision is different, and we've written this editorial as a way to reflect on why this tendency toward scholarly writing remains so strong and to begin to curb and transform it. We hope that by articulating the *EMR's* mission and its writing standards in a substantive and coherent way, we can help prospective *EMR* authors and reviewers to overcome this challenge. Our hope is that the editorial helps to bring fresh views of knowledge production and dissemination into the world of executive doctoral programs and, in doing so, to make possible a greater integration of practitioner and scholar roles on behalf of its participants.

This manuscript has benefitted from the comments and discussions with many of our colleagues, including Richard Boland, Paul Salipante, Jagdip Singh, Lars Mathiassen, Emma Parry, James Gaskin, Mariana Amatullo, Milagros Pereira, and Ted Ladd. All the remaining mistakes and omissions, naturally, are ours.

## Narrowing the Dissemination Gap: Genres For Practitioner Scholarship

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#### ABSTRACT

Practitioners with a minimum of ten years of management experience increasingly enroll in doctoral-level management education programs. When entering these programs, their view of the world shifts as they augment practitioner perspectives with scholarly perspectives. They acquire distinct competencies in framing, inquiring, and addressing managerial problems as *practitioner-scholars* who act as boundary spanners between academia and management practice. Unfortunately, current management outlets for knowledge dissemination do not explicitly support boundary-spanning strategies and writing genres. At one end of the spectrum are academically focused journals, where concerns of theory and method dominate. The target audience of these outlets is academic scholars—the same group of scholars who produce the knowledge. At the other end of the spectrum are practitioner-focused journals with genres that focus on communicating practical insights for practice. Here, concerns of practitioner problems dominate, and the genres emphasize practical experience and good stories. The articles are authored either by scholars or practitioners, and they convey knowledge that the editors and authors believe to be salient for the targeted audience. In this paper, we formulate an alternative dissemination strategy for a new practitioner scholarship journal titled *Engaged Management ReView (EMR)*. The journal gives high priority to boundary spanning in content, audience, and forms of knowledge and seeks to narrow the dissemination gap between the two worlds by integrating the traditionally separate genres into new genres. In this inaugural editorial essay, we reveal the logic that guided us in creating the journal and in innovating and imagining its genres. In particular, we discuss select practitioner scholarship genres promoted by *EMR* that balance academic rigor with practical relevance. By promoting these forms of writing, we aim to create for practitioner-scholars a space in which they can better reinforce, interweave, and experiment with the bifurcated intellectual foundations that inform their scholarship, and in doing so, to build a repository of such works to allow for awareness, ongoing debate, and expansion of this new perspective on knowledge production.

## INTRODUCTION

The rigor–relevance gap has engendered a long-standing debate among management scholars and practitioners, dating back at least 100 years (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). The gap refers to the perpetual state in which executives do not turn to academics, resulting in their failure to take into account important knowledge that could have improved their decisions, while academics fail to turn to executives for their scholarship, resulting in wasted resources and significant opportunity costs (Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001). The gap reflects a deeper rift than mere gossip in academic corridors, particularly when scholars ask themselves: where to publish? In fact, the gap manifests in actual consequences that affect millions of people's lives. A vivid example is the now-recognized fact that nearly all key policymakers ignored rigorous research results of the chief economist of the International Monetary Fund in 2005 that identified the looming housing crisis. The resulting calamity in 2008 included a freefall of the stock markets, elimination of jobs, and both financial and material carnage in the United States and across the globe (London, 2011). Trying to close the rigor–relevance gap clearly should be an important aspiration for both academics and practitioners.

In this article, we introduce the rationale for a novel knowledge dissemination approach designed to narrow the gap. We begin by introducing the *practitioner-scholar*—a practitioner embedded in the complexities of professional practice while simultaneously being engulfed in scholarly models of thinking and evidence-based research (Bartunek, 2008; Salipante & Aram, 2003; Tenkasi, 2011). Based on the uniqueness of and opportunities afforded by this role, we argue for the need of a means of dissemination suited for unique

practitioner–scholar knowledge. The perceived need provides the impetus and motivation to create a new academic, practitioner-oriented management online journal, *Engaged Management ReView (EMR)*.

This journal is the official outlet for students, alumni, and faculty who participate in practitioner–researcher doctorate programs of the Executive Doctorate of Business Administration Council (EDBAC). The idea, motivation, and structure of such programs in North America, the United Kingdom, Europe, Asia, and Australia have been extensively reported (Benerjee & Morley, 2013; Erwee, 2004; Gill & Hoppe, 2009; Hay, 2004; Huff, 2000; Salipante & Aram, 2003).<sup>1</sup> EDBAC serves as a platform on which to build a community of practitioner–scholars and to gain a deeper understanding of practitioner scholarship, its value, and how to improve it through educational interventions. As such, *EMR* serves as a voice not only for EDBAC programs, but also for the broader practitioner–scholar community interested in generating knowledge that addresses relevant management problems through rigorous research.

Although the idea of the practitioner–scholar is not new, it has a relatively short history, dating back only 30 years, at most. This brevity has contributed to a limited outreach and understanding of the purpose and value of practitioner–scholars, especially when compared to the long-standing and familiar recognition of the differences between the academic and practitioner communities and their varying knowledge needs and knowledge production forms. The primary purpose of this article is therefore to engage in a discussion of the nature and aims of practitioner–scholar knowledge production and how and why this knowledge is distinct from both practitioner knowledge and

scholarly knowledge. We also clarify why practitioner–scholar perspectives disseminated through *EMR* might help narrow the knowledge dissemination gap.

## THE DISSEMINATION GAP

Approaches to address the rigor–relevance gap focus either on the input side of the gulf by endorsing some form of engaged scholarship—for example, engaged scholarship, action research, or participant research (Van de Ven, 2007)—or the output side, most eloquently expressed in Denise Rousseau's idea of evidence-based management (Rousseau, 2006). Although both approaches are sorely needed and useful in narrowing the gulf, they come with some limitations. Primarily, they focus on increasing either the absorptive capacity of the academic community's understanding of the practitioner's concerns (the input side) or the knowledge packaging skills of the academic community toward practitioners (output side). What is missing in both approaches is research that truly satisfies the needs of practitioners to improve how they engage and mobilize practical, valid knowledge (Starkey & Madan, 2001). Here, the concept of practitioner scholarship, as endorsed by the executive doctoral programs, seeks most fittingly to address this weakness. This community posits that practitioner scholarship has the potential to transform the input side as managers engage directly in all phases of research inquiry and knowledge production. Its indirect effects also can be experienced on the output side because of the deep concern of practitioner–scholars to tell good stories in a reflective and rigorous way, grounded in the “buzzing world.” Practitioners' absorptive capacity can be increased when research is communicated in formats that make research findings more relevant to practices. Because our

<sup>1</sup> EDBAC was founded in 2011 to serve as a representative global voice for doctoral programs that educate practitioner–scholars in management. As of 2017, almost 50 program members are represented in 13 countries. In the United States, the current set of universities offering such programs includes Case Western Reserve University, Creighton University, DePaul University, Georgia State University, Oklahoma State University, Temple University, University of Maryland University College, University of North Carolina, University of South Florida, University of Wisconsin, and Virginia Tech, among others. Worldwide, almost 200 institutions offer similar doctoral programs for practitioner–scholars (Graf, 2014).

primary goal here is to address the burning issues facing practicing managers, we give special attention to the input side of the rigor–relevance gap.

In engaged scholarship, *scholars* collaborate with a select set of involved managers, while in practitioner scholarship, *managers* become practicing scholars through an educational intervention process. Practitioner scholarship is a particular form of engaged scholarship in which the idea of collaborative inquiry between scholars and practitioners is expanded to accommodate practitioners who also become researchers and who dynamically mesh the roles of scholar and practitioner. In engaged scholarship, the practitioner’s involvement in research collaborations is primarily *content-based* and *informative*; the manager’s contribution is to provide experience-based insights, while the scholar’s role is to interpret these insights to advance valid knowledge claims (Van de Ven, 2007). In contrast, with practitioner scholarship, the practitioner’s involvement becomes *process-based* and *transformative*; the research contribution emerges in multiple phases and forms and evolves dynamically, generating ultimately valid knowledge claims but also a new type of knowledge producer—one who combines the roles of scholar and practitioner in approaching a “problem-of-practice.”

The distinctive characteristic of practitioner-scholars is the intellectual journey they travel when they attend a doctoral program. During this journey, practicing managers learn scholarly ways of thinking and acting to address the practical problems they face. As a result, when they re-enter practice as a practitioner-scholar, they know how to collaborate with academic scholars and with other practitioner-scholars in the pursuit of practice-focused research discoveries. The practitioner-scholar can expediently search for, assimilate, and apply theoretical and methodological knowledge to shape management practices. This engagement is much deeper than the engagement assumed in evidence-based management (Salipante & Aram, 2003).

In traditional engaged scholarship, the primary knowledge producer is the scholar, who during the collaborations relies on the knowledge production canons offered by a community of peers educated in scholarly research. Engagement with practitioners is for the purpose of generating valid knowledge claims that can be organized into writings seen as legitimate by fellow scholars. In academic inquiry, what and how we know is ultimately founded on validity determinations dictated by scientific method and received theory. In practitioner scholarship, the practitioner-scholar is the primary knowledge producer. In practitioner scholarship, what and how we know is based, on the one hand, on validity established through the use of accepted scientific methods and theory; on the other hand, validity also must rest in the practitioner’s experiences and challenges. For the traditional engaged scholar, academic knowledge is the primary outcome—something that the academic community has after the research. In contrast, for the practitioner-scholar, academic knowledge is an important output but not the primary one. The primary concern ultimately is the manager’s potential for new interactions with the world, guided by the operative idea of “action” (Dewey, 1948).

Acknowledging these *knowledge differences* is germane in generating alternative dissemination strategies that can address the rigor–relevance gap. They motivate us to attend to *new forms of knowledge dissemination* in light of outputs that reflect the unique identity, position, and goals of practitioner scholarship. Consequently, the mechanisms to convey and validate knowledge need to be different from those used by either “pure” academic management journals (e.g., *Academy of Management Journal* and *Academy of Management Review*) or “pure” practitioner-focused magazines (e.g., *Harvard Business Review*, *Sloan Management Review*, and professional journals). For traditional engaged scholarship, which builds on the academic tradition, the sense of a dissemination problem is lacking. Either the outlets at its disposal—scholarly journals and practitioner magazines—are well aligned with

scholarly needs and related ideas of knowing, or they can be transferred as professional knowledge to targeted audiences. However, practitioner-scholars, armed with a different concept of knowing, face a significant dissemination problem. Either practitioner-scholars need to translate their knowledge into a “purely” scholarly argument and related genres, or they have to turn to a practitioner magazine as an outlet. The latter comes at a considerable cost in that it cannot convey practitioner scholarship in its authentic form and cannot accumulate a repository of practitioner-scholar knowledge.

This need to address the dissemination gap for practitioner-scholars forms the primary motivation to create new forms of research dissemination. Many of us in the practitioner scholarship community ask: How can we make a larger audience of managers aware of the forms and value of practitioner scholarship, and how do we effectively package practitioner scholarship in forms that honor the novelty and rigor of the knowledge production process? Such questions underlie the need to find new ways to communicate practitioner scholarship knowledge to practitioners, practitioner-scholars, and academics alike. For us, the responses to these questions served as a call to discover and develop new genres of scholarly writing and to establish *EMR* as a new kind of management journal.

We next explain the logic that underlies our attempts to address the dissemination gap, the reasoning behind *EMR*’s position in relation to other forms of knowledge dissemination, and its role in closing the dissemination gap. First, we articulate a way to transcend the false dichotomy between scholarly and practitioner knowledge. The knowledge produced in practitioner scholarship challenges us to think innovatively about knowledge dissemination products that honor the full complexity of the ways in which knowledge is produced. Second, we discuss challenges that practitioner-scholars face when they cross the internal and external boundaries of the rigor–relevance gap and

the competencies they need to have to manage this crossing. Third, we discuss and compare dissemination options for practitioner scholarship (i.e., either to use the existing scholarly outlets or practitioner outlets, or to create a new outlet with a new set of genres). Fourth, we position *EMR* as a management journal that fills the dissemination gap by promoting new genres that balance the two voices in practitioner scholarship: the scholar and the practitioner. These two voices co-exist in entangled forms in practitioner scholarship and constitute the novelty of this form of engaged scholarship and its genres. We focus, in particular, on how to write empirical papers in ways that intertwine the two voices in practitioner scholarship and that honor its aims. To make this comparison more intelligible, the Appendix provides examples of *EMR's* empirical article genre. It also offers guidelines on how to write in this genre, with illustrative examples.

## THE KNOWLEDGE DIFFERENCE

In practitioner scholarship, a highly experienced manager becomes a scholar by completing a doctoral-level education on some management topic. Although alternative naming conventions have been used to label the managers who complete such doctoral studies (Hay, 2004), we use here the term management practitioner-scholar (Bartunek, 2008; Salipante & Aram, 2003; Tenkasi, 2011). The monikers for these doctoral-level education programs vary, although they generally come under the rubric of executive doctoral degrees (Banerjee & Morley, 2013).<sup>2</sup> This education is designed for *experienced* managers as professionals. It seeks to advance the development of practical, transformational knowledge valued by this group of practitioners. Unique to this approach is anchoring the research during the duration of the educational interven-

tion into the practitioner's experienced problems. The educational intervention ensures that practitioners research only significant, wicked problems with which they are intimately familiar so that they "own" the problem. This ownership heightens the organizational salience of the research process and its outputs. At the same time, the learning process is scholarly because it puts strict requirements on the quality of the intervention: The process must produce rigorous empirical and theoretical knowledge that frames and explains critical aspects of the problem and therefore helps to influence the problem's solution. As a result, the final knowledge output is more "consumable" in practice.

### Problem of Practice

A common characteristic of practitioner scholarship interventions is the pivotal role that the selected problem-of-practice has in shaping the research goals and the questions of the study that follows. A problem-of-practice is defined here as a domain-related challenge being experienced by a practitioner. The involved person's practically anchored orientation toward the world, involvement in *praxis*, and going concerns thus are manifested in it. The problem-of-practice reflects the practitioner's experiential and contextual knowledge, in which he or she is deeply invested, and it forms the unique foundation for the practitioner-scholar intervention that follows: (1) The input originates from the practitioner's experiences of troubling issues actually encountered; and (2) the practitioner conducts the research while learning research methods in intense collaborations with academic scholars. The output ultimately reflects their joint attempt to produce knowledge about the problem.

Traditional research in management formulates research problems primarily on the basis of received theoretical frames or

puzzles. These problems or questions are raised by reviewing and filling gaps in prior research while synthesizing existing pools of theory and empirical research. The research is informed by an established theory that typically originates within a singular discipline (e.g., economics, psychology, or sociology). Because management scholars apply such a theory and raise questions that are consequential in light of that theory in an organizational setting, the common assumption is that the knowledge generated is relevant to practitioners. It attests to the practice-based phenomenon through the lens of established theory and is therefore a valid representation of the problem. However, given the many cries proclaiming the void of relevance in much of management research (Bennis, & O'Toole 2005; Mohrman & Lawler, 2011), the relevance seems to be too rarely achieved.

### Epistemological Foundations

Starting from the problem-of-practice might appear to be appealing, but it comes with significant challenges. Aram and Salipante (2003) identify three: First, the research continually has to fight against losing the nuances of a practitioner's context; because of their strong logic and clarity, the voices of scholars tend to overpower the diffuse and cacophonous voices of the practitioners. Therefore, the problem-of-practice has to be at the center throughout the research process. *Appropriate* framing here is the key because when the research process fails to frame the problem in ways that honor the practitioner's experience—more precisely, their lifeworld (Habermas, 1979)—then the value of the diversity that problem framing should entail gets lost (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011). However, such a process of framing often is at odds with the requirements of scholarly genres, which prefer theory as a primary framing device. Although this scholarly framing is not necessarily at odds with practitioner genres

<sup>2</sup> These degrees have many names, including the doctorate of business administration (DBA), executive doctorate in business administration (EDBA), doctor of management (DM), doctor of strategic leadership, executive doctorate in business, doctor of professional studies, professional doctorate of business administration, doctor of organizational change, and doctor of philosophy. Each label naturally comes with its unique programmatic and pedagogical focus and variation in content and curricular goals.

and understanding, a framing by practitioner-scholars based on research knowledge later reinforced by theory can lead practitioner-scholars to create knowledge that generally is shunned by practitioner genres and arguments.

Second, scholars emphasize the declarative, the deductive, the universal, and the synthetic elements of the theory, while practitioners strive to understand, influence, and finesse the context—the tacit, the concrete experience, the particular, the inductive, and the praxeological (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011). The struggle, according to Aram and Salipante (2003), is to balance the need for local experience and action by grounding the inquiry in the context while also reaching to the edifice of generalized theory. The resulting need to oscillate between the two epistemologies calls not only for recognizing the value of both, but also for tacking iteratively between the two—ignoring neither one, observing their tensions, seeking to learn from each by visiting and acting on both epistemologies.

Aram and Salipante (2003) use the hermeneutic circle as a means to be sensitive to two epistemologies and to cycle between them during the research journey. They use the circle as a way of generating an expansive knowledge-creation spiral, which originates from the problem-of-practice and then expands to integrate both worlds and their knowledge elements as the journey continues. The worldview/lifeworld that is constructed by practitioner-scholars shapes their identity, which is neither that of the scholar nor that of the practitioner.<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 depicts the differences between the three worldviews discussed. For a practitioner-scholar, living in a singular intellectual home is neither satisfactory nor sustainable. Tilting to either side is unproductive and dangerous for practitioner-scholars because doing so prevents them from achieving the fullest potential in narrowing the dissemination gap. This dissatisfaction is the

epistemological motivation for resolving the dissemination gap and proposing a new basis for disseminating knowledge.

Third, scholarly knowledge has its own standards of validity and rigor and of generating and organizing the evidence. Aram and Salipante (2003) suggest a parallel concept of validity for relevance. Bacharach (1989) calls this measure of validity usefulness, while Lindblom and Cohen (1979) call it usable knowledge. Dewey (1948) called it *consequence*. The question of relevance, then, is whether the knowledge explains what is happening in the experience of the practitioner. Practitioner-scholars who live in this practitioner experience are best positioned to assess such levels of consequence. Therefore, standards need to be established to evaluate the practical effect and actionability of the established knowledge.

By Dewey's (1948) definition, practitioner-scholars are best positioned to create these standards. Validity along both dimensions of rigor and relevance can best be measured within a community of individuals who inhabit and have skills to operate in both worlds. A community of practitioner-scholars that can establish standards for simultaneous evaluation of both types of contributions—rigor and relevance—is needed. Building and developing this community become a critical antecedent in narrowing the dissemination gap. Tacking across epistemological boundaries serves here as a guiding principle in the design of an appropriate dissemination outlet for practitioner scholarship. Establishing standards to evaluate knowledge influence and actionability needs to be a significant goal for the practitioner-scholar community. This process is to be foregrounded, explored, and debated in *EMR* essays.

### **Balancing Theory and Practice**

Salipante and Aram (2003) suggest a baseline for the concept of the practitioner-scholar and how the faculty in ex-

ecutive doctoral programs can participate in building a practitioner-scholar community. The faculty provides the necessary input about what thinking and acting in a scholarly manner mean. Salipante and Aram (2003) also argue that the uniqueness of practitioner-scholar knowledge resides in its distinct purpose and different criteria for its production. They observe that the creation in 1995 of the first North American practitioner-scholar doctoral program at Case Western Reserve University remains a significant hallmark of the recognition of this unique purpose.

A key lesson learned from participating in the Case Western Reserve University program, and made clearer in discussions among people who have been participating for more than 20 years, is that practitioner-scholars learn the scholarly abstractions relatively easily. This learning adds conceptual rigor and enhances the conceptual clarity and validity of the practitioner-scholar's research. It also provides a long-term perspective of the knowledge being generated and anchors the interpretation of the evidence to scholarly theory. However, the practitioner-scholar's concern for the practical use of the knowledge foregrounds the short-term perspective in providing evidence and naming theoretical contributions. This tension emerges in most inquiries during the study and generates a multiplicity of trade-off questions about how to balance long-term and short-term issues in practitioner scholarship. Should the garnered evidence more tightly integrate theory and literature? What happens when the evidence contradicts established theory? How can practitioner-scholars move effectively among high-level decontextualized abstractions of social theory and yet weave them together with concrete facts and narratives that emerge from the problem-focused inquiry? How much are we solving an issue, and how much are we seeking to understand and explain a phenomenon? How do these two goals relate in specific settings? This constant balancing between

<sup>3</sup> Alumni from the Case Western Reserve program have called this identity a "striped elephant."

the two forms of knowledge often is the hardest part of an intervention—yet it forms a key competency for any practitioner-scholar. Again, posing and answering such questions should be part of the wider discussion. Such issues are to be formally questioned, debated, and argued in *EMR*.

Much of the balancing is ultimately manifested in the forms of knowledge dissemination carried out by practitioner-scholars based on their research. Developing the skills and struggling with this balancing so far have been largely addressed only in informal exchanges within each executive doctoral program, as well as in conference presentations dedicated to practitioner-scholars, such as the Engaged Management Scholarship (EMS) conference. Balancing theory and practice boundaries and, consequently, tacking back and forth across rigor and relevance, form the primary difference that sets the identity of the practitioner-scholar apart from that of scholar and that of practitioner. This formulation of boundaries and their crossing is depicted in Figure 1, where the x-axis represents the act of bal-

ancing between theory and practice, while the y-axis represents the act of tacking back and forth between rigor and relevance. As a result, the lifeworld of the practitioner-scholar—the shared common understanding of the knowledge of the world—is fundamentally distinct from and more complex than that of either the scholar or the practitioner. We next discuss challenges that a practitioner-scholar needs to overcome in disseminating knowledge that cuts across and manifests these diverse worlds.

### DISSEMINATION OPTIONS

The current options that practitioner-scholars have for knowledge dissemination are limited to the genres of either scholarly journals or practitioner journals and magazines. Both genres have evolved as part of the professionalization that creates its specialized forms of knowledge production and dissemination. Although scholars have made several attempts to bridge the rigor–relevance gap and to manage the tension (Hodgkinson & Rousseau, 2009), many also have recognized the continuing inability to share

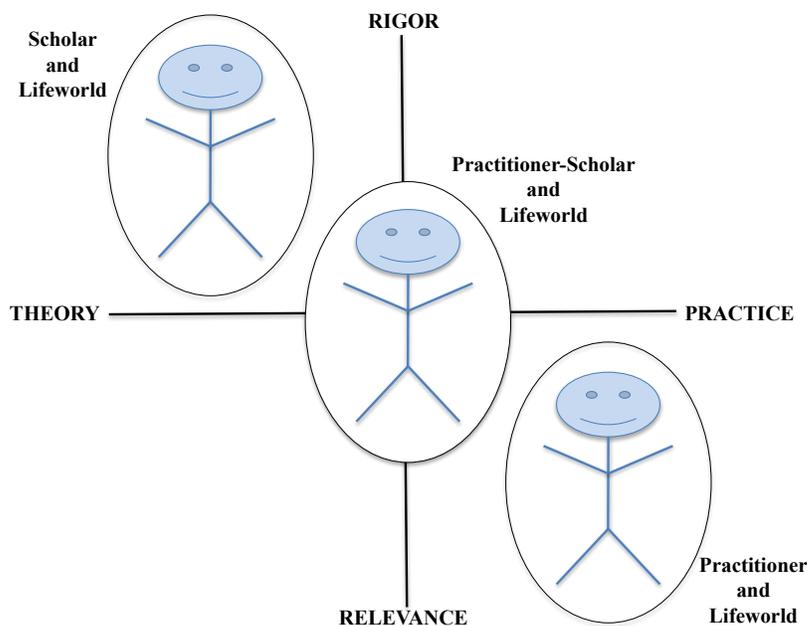
knowledge between scholar and practitioner communities—hence the ongoing rigor–relevance debate. This observation lies at the heart of our definition of the dissemination gap for practitioner-scholars. This inability motivated us to consider new options for knowledge dissemination and to ask how to design publication outlets fit for practitioner scholarship. The options discussed either maintain the status quo and continue with existing dissemination forms, or seek change to the status quo and create something that serves the unique characteristics of practitioner scholarship.

#### Option 1: Use Current Genres

This option disseminates practitioner scholarship research using the existing genres of scholarly and practitioner journals. For scholarly journals, the results of practitioner scholarship generally must be presented as a single theory-based narrative that demonstrates rigor in data analysis and meets validity and reliability standards. This form of presentation has been achieved with varying degrees of success by some of the alumni from executive doctoral programs, but this route is not easy. The call for such theory-based writing does not align well with the analysis needs and practice focus of practitioner-scholar research. Related theory can in many cases be developed only over longer periods of gestation for the topics covered by practitioner-scholars. Because of time limitations, such options are not realistic for most practitioner-scholars. Therefore, the main reason for the lack of publication success in such settings is practitioner-scholars' interest and motivation: they primarily are practice-focused and undertake problem analysis that is not strictly theory-based. The long review cycles present another challenge, in that the ongoing demands for literature integration, data analysis, and theory are costly and offer few rewards or incentives to practitioner-scholars.

In the context of publishing in practitioner journals, the dissemination options open to practitioner-scholars cover a wider

**Figure 1. Lifeworld Characteristic of the Practitioner-Scholar: Crossing Boundaries**



range of outlets to disseminate relevant practical knowledge. Here again, practitioner scholarship needs to be transformed, this time into practice-driven stories in which the focus is on demonstrating tight links between problems and their salience and the viability and actionability of the recommendations offered. What is missing is evidence-based and theory-driven explanations delivered in a way that is understandable to practitioners and is transferrable into their practice. The analysis needs to provide explanations of why practice recommendations would work or why the practices should be viewed through the lens as advocated by the practitioner. Very little in these articles pushes the knowledge beyond first-hand practical experience (no matter how valuable it is), to reveal in-depth frameworks for analyzing and processing the experience and thus to explain how to reflectively theorize about it and how to recognize the biases that shape the knowledge gleaned from the practical experience.

Option 1 does not offer the practitioner-scholar community options for fully developing and honing the skillsets needed for disseminating the unique bifurcated knowledge of the community. A fundamental reason is that successful communications between actors within these two worlds use different languages. Yet, effective communication presumes a common linguistic basis that includes a common sense of the structure of expressions, form of sentences, and organization of paragraphs (syntax); the meaning of these elements (semantics); and an understanding of how the meanings can be applied so that they are likely to penetrate the actor's lifeworld and shape consequent action (pragmatics). Per Carlile (2004), when significant discrepancies exist in the linguistic basis, the parties are likely to experience great difficulties in sharing knowledge. Ultimately, each party faces difficulty in understanding the other's expression (Van de Ven, 2007).

Additional considerations related to crossing lifeworld boundaries render Option 1

not viable. Weick (1979) uses the concept of "double interact" to describe how people living in separate lifeworlds interact. Double interact suggests that when scholars interact closely around a problem-of-practice with practitioners during the educational interventions, they enter into a collaborative knowledge-sharing cycle—the hermeneutic spiral—that can reduce the gap and alleviate cognitive differences. The process can gradually collapse the gap, or at least make the boundary porous. However, in the context of practitioner scholarship, this double interact occurs dynamically and over extended periods of time. At the beginning of the educational intervention, the collaborators are scholars on one side and practitioners on the other. But as the intervention continues, the scholar no doubt learns something about the practitioner context, and more importantly, the practitioner in the double interact becomes other than a pure practitioner: He or she becomes a practitioner-scholar having a liminal presence and an understanding of the other's lifeworld.

The educational intervention shifts in the double interact context from scholar-working-with-practitioner to scholar-working-with-scholar-practitioner. When such tightening of the gap occurs, scholars must learn *not* to broadcast and impose their theoretically anchored ways of looking at the world on the practitioner-scholar. Rather, through constant dialogue, academic scholars need to build the capability to take the perspective of the practitioner. By mastering this new kind of perspective-taking (Krauss & Fussell, 1991), the scholar learns to see the world increasingly through the eyes of the practitioner and frames the knowledge to be transferred in ways that make it more likely to make sense in the eyes of the practitioner. Similarly, the practitioner gradually learns the logic and criteria of how scientific knowledge is built, evaluated, composed, and presented. Such elements of practitioner scholarship must be fostered and developed so that practitioner-scholars are not transformed into ivory-tower scholars and do not revert to

purely practitioner perspectives. Over time, having only scholarly journals and practitioner magazines as dissemination choices for the practitioner-scholar reinforces shifts toward the role and perspectives of *either* scholar *or* managing practitioner.

Consequently, the long-term cost to the practitioner-scholar community with Option 1 is the absence of a shared repository of unique knowledge relevant to the management practitioner-scholar community. Neither of the other communities is limited in this way because they have their outlets and knowledge dissemination channels that make produced knowledge transparent, accessible, and permanent. Scholars also have at their disposal practitioner magazines if they choose to transform their scholarly knowledge to a form accessible to the practitioner community (Birkinshaw, Lecuona, & Barwise, 2016). Having such a repository of formal practitioner scholarship knowledge can facilitate the professionalization of the associated knowledge community (Boland & Tenkasi, 1995).

Option 1, then, has the short-term advantage of leveraging existing institutional outlets for knowledge dissemination. But the long-term disadvantage is that it inhibits the development and reinforcement of practitioner scholarship as a specific professional management community's way of knowing. Therefore, for practitioner scholarship, Option 1 has disadvantages that far outweigh its advantages.

### **Option 2: Create New Genres**

Option 2 is to create new genres customized to the needs of the practitioner-scholar community. From a strategic perspective, Option 2 raises the question: How can the practitioner-scholar community be better served by creating an archival repository of exemplary research of practitioner scholarship. This repository is viewed as a necessary building block for the community's full professional development. It also is a means to create and assess the full potential of practitioner

scholarship to affect managerial practices. The practitioner scholarship repository is not intended to replace the use of practitioner magazines as a venue to influence the practitioner audiences. Instead, with Option 2, the new genres give practitioner-scholars a means to express and professionalize the uniqueness of their research processes and products. If such genres were constructed so that practitioners also could read and understand the output, then additional benefits would accrue.

## NARROWING THE DISSEMINATION GAP

The idea for creating new practitioner scholarship genres resulted in *EMR*. The journal was conceptualized in 2014 within the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. It was originally established as a means to communicate high-quality practitioner-scholar research conducted within the school. The idea was quickly embraced outside Case by the EDBAC professional doctorate community, inspiring visions of using it as a global knowledge repository of exemplary practitioner-scholar research. Because of ambitious quality objectives and the need to ensure understanding about the quality standards for practitioner-scholar journals, the journal's articles undergo double-blind peer review in line with calls for validity in academic research. In addition, because of the unique nature of the journal as a practitioner-scholar journal, its submissions are reviewed by both faculty and the students and alumni of the doctoral programs (i.e., by actual practitioner-scholars). To achieve the widest dissemination, *EMR* has been produced as an online, open-access publication, similar to several academic journals in the natural sciences. However, we note some visible differences between *EMR* and academic journals because of the former's mission to publish practitioner-scholar knowledge. These differences are particularly evident in two categories: the unusual liminality for some of the genres, and the unique genres of *EMR* articles.

## Design Assumptions

As noted, practitioner-scholars lack their own professional language that bridges the two worlds. To compensate, they develop the capacity to speak both languages, moving fluidly between the two and engaging in related arguments. Accordingly, *EMR* has been designed to occupy and influence the liminal and exciting space between scholars and practitioners so that the writing in the journal recognizes, reinforces, aligns, and invigorates the inherent tensions between the two. These tensions are typically experienced by participants in most executive doctoral programs because the programs involve the use and analysis of research questions using either qualitative or quantitative research methods in addressing a problem-of-practice.

## Genres in *EMR*

In the design of *EMR*, a critical aspect has been to recognize the boundary crossings that define a practitioner-scholar: the tacking between validity, theory, and practice. With this key aspect in mind, and honoring the guiding principle of supporting the professional development of practitioner-scholars and their research, certain features of the journal are intended to ensure that boundary-crossing persists in the writing and through the voices of scholar and practitioner. A scholarly voice uses controlled and technically precise language that is meaningful to trained scholars accustomed to scholarly inquiry; the writing foregrounds and prioritizes abstract, generalizable knowledge and the resulting theory development and methodology. A practitioner voice uses professional management language widely understood in everyday business practice. It places priority on narrating the tangible context and the lived experience of managers, and it is oriented toward concrete solutions, experiences, and actions whereby real-world problems are resolved. This voice needs to be persuasive and use lived experience and specific narrative forms to examine the context and goals of the proposed action. A practitioner voice, which is intuitively understandable, constructs

knowledge that is immediately usable by managers.

In rethinking genre, another realization came from asking how doctoral program alumni make use of (their) research after the program. Academics, especially those in the United States, rarely or never face this question because they tend not to carry their research knowledge into the world of practice, and they do not themselves personally engage in such "translations." Because practitioner-scholars do cross the boundary into practice, *EMR* reports on how research influences, and unfolds in, practice. The genre that reports such inquiries is introduced in the journal as *translational papers*. Translational papers form a space in which the goals and means of evidence-based management are discussed in the context of practitioner scholarship.

A third realization influencing the genre in *EMR* comes because the professionalization of the practitioner-scholar community and its scholarship is still in its infancy. As a result, the need arises for self-reflection and critique of what practitioner scholarship is all about, its essential capabilities, its limitations, and the substantive epistemological or praxeological explorations that can benefit its development. This genre category is known as the *essay genre*, and we have alluded to relevant topics that might be explored in the use of it.

*EMR* thus publishes three genres relevant to practitioner scholarship:

*Empirical research* (<https://emr.case.edu/contribute/empirical>): Empirical papers disseminate research to develop a formal repository of exemplary practitioner-scholar knowledge and to strengthen the identity of the practitioner-scholar community by solidifying and manifesting a body of practitioner-relevant, evidence-grounded, and theory-informed and/or locally interpreted management knowledge. (Further guidance on empirical papers is provided in the following section.)

*Translation research* (<https://emr.case.edu/contribute/translation>): Translation papers report the experiences, successes, and failures in applying management research results in practice and what is learned from it, reflecting on and further theorizing in light of such attempts.

*Practitioner scholarship essays* (<https://emr.case.edu/contribute/essay>): Practitioner scholarship essays are divided into three subgenres. The first is similar to a classic *survey of a research topic* or a research field, but in contrast to traditional scholarly surveys that primarily guide and direct research into a domain by providing an overview of the state-of-the-art research in a field, the *EMR* survey articles examine the status of the research to provide directions and guidance on how to approach and influence specific management practices—the focus is quite similar to the goals of evidence-based management and attempts to synthesize relevant research for effective management action (Hodgkinson & Rousseau 2009). The second type of practitioner scholarship essay is a *theory review*, in which the author focuses on one or more select theories from the stock of social science and/or management disciplines and demonstrates how chosen theories inform the formulation and address of specific management problems. The third type is an *epistemological essay*, which is primarily philosophical and conceptual. It examines the nature of practitioner-scholar knowledge, related epistemologies and methods of inquiry, and their relationships to practice or forms of knowing in practice. This article is an example of this type of essay.

### The Empirical Research Article

How do the format and structure of an empirical paper work to interweave the two voices: scholarly and practitioner? Fundamentally, each empirical paper presents and “listens to” the two voices that inform *EMR*’s mission; it does so by constructing a dialogue based on coherent logic that combines these voices into a unique and exciting narrative. The dialogue must bind together a manager’s experi-

ence, problems, and solutions that informed the practitioner-scholar’s research inquiry, as well as the theoretical deliberations that followed it. We place this genre at the center of the proposed knowledge dissemination genres in *EMR*, serving the practitioners and demonstrating the practical value of practitioner scholarship. Expectations for empirical articles are to be firmly and clearly set so that the readers and authors can understand our reasoning behind recommended editorial choices that make the *EMR* research article unique.

The novelty of the empirical research genre in *EMR* calls for a novel organization and articulation of the argument that reflects the duality of practitioner scholarship. Both voices are integrated by using a strictly enforced article format designed, on the one hand, to allow for a quick review of the research topic and findings and their importance while, on the other hand, providing adequate articulation of the theory and method being followed so that the practitioner remains engaged. The article format therefore must include thorough reporting to show the validity of the inferences of the theoretical basis, the logic of choosing it, and the clear articulation of how it demonstrates the validity of the identified contribution. Theoretically, and somewhat ironically in hindsight, we see that an *EMR* empirical article can serve not only as a boundary object working to narrow the dissemination gap, but also as the structure or framework itself that serves to advance the creation of a new space for tacking between boundaries (Star, 2010).

Examples showing the detailed format of empirical research articles are provided in the Appendix. Table 1 spells out the content and functions of the major sections and underlying voices (i.e., Abstract, Synopsis, Methods, Main Body, and a required Appendix for Methods), while Tables 2–4 provide guidance on how to write specific subsections of the article, including the Synopsis, Methods, and Main Body. For each section, we identify the “foregrounded” voice and provide the guiding narrative of writing in that voice. The *EMR* research article format allows for and results in the

foregrounding of both voices in a serial fashion. It introduces each voice into a conversation in the article between the two worlds. This serialization epitomizes the unique character of practitioner scholarship and demands that authors recognize the tensions and challenges that come with this type of writing.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have outlined the rationale of the new proposed management research dissemination outlet that serves in the development and professionalization of practitioner scholarship. To this end, we have discussed how the proposed outlet helps to narrow the dissemination gap created by the dominance of writing genres that rigidly separate the scholarly and practitioner journals and genres. We articulate the necessity of identifying and honoring both of these two sources of knowledge and recognizing this hybrid form as a means to act effectively in management settings. This need is particularly pronounced when management practitioners start to act as scholars. These knowledge-producing-and-using hybrids—called *practitioner-scholars*—bring previously unseen, deep-seated management problems embedded in the world of practice into the searchlight of research communities and their forms of knowing.

Practitioner-scholars follow canons of scientific rigor by using qualitative and quantitative methods and therefore frame the inquiry in ways that build on and improve theory while also generating actionable knowledge relevant for management situations. The key question we raise here is how practitioner-scholar knowledge—involving incessant cycling driven by the epistemological quest for both rigor and relevance—makes its journey from the original source of creation to a properly packaged and disseminated knowledge form that honors both the context of discovery and the logic of justification. We have limited our discussion to the unique features and challenges in disseminating practitioner-scholar knowledge by intro-

ducing the context and rationale to present, interweave, and balance the scholar and practitioner voices while writing in the different genres of *EMR*. In particular, we have shown how these voices inform the design of the writing of the empirical research article in *EMR*.

We hope that this essay provides a clear and persuasive ethic of why we believe our endeavor is worthwhile. To allow for further scrutiny and review, we have communicated our assumptions about and our current reading of the disciplinary context underlying the design of the *EMR* genres. We therefore are receptive to any critical arguments or constructive feedback that relate to our grounding and inferences. Our hope is that articles published in these formats have a greater likelihood both of influencing the actions and decisions of managers and of shaping their minds and hearts. In addition to a strong narrative about theory and an experienced story of practical problems, these articles need to incorporate valid and solid evidence and occasional numbers. To quote the old saying, with a twist: Bad numbers beat no numbers in any management context; but a good story and strong evidence and theory can convey more meaningful numbers in manifold ways! Had policymakers in 2005 benefited from a more compelling and stronger story about the looming housing crisis, the 2008 financial crisis might not have happened in the disastrous way it did.

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## APPENDIX: THE TWO VOICES IN SECTIONS OF *EMR* EMPIRICAL ARTICLES

Table 1. Empirical Paper Format

Section	Foregrounded Voice
Abstract	Scholar
Synopsis	Practitioner
Methods	Scholar
Main Body	Scholar and Practitioner
Appendix for Methods (Required)	Scholar
Additional Appendices (Optional)	As needed

Table 2. Synopsis: Voice of the Practitioner

Section	Guidance	Example of Voice
<p><b>SYNOPSIS (~800 words)</b></p> <p>The synopsis is akin to an executive summary in a practitioner journal. The synopsis consists of six required parts, as described and illustrated in this table. All parts must be written in the practitioner voice.</p>	<p><b>PURPOSE:</b> Describe in one or two sentences the purpose of the research.</p>	<p>“The purpose of this research is to understand how various informational and environmental conditions affect an employee’s ability to create knowledge needed for organizational decision-making.”</p>
	<p><b>PROBLEM OF PRACTICE:</b> Include a paragraph or so explaining the specific problem experienced by a practitioner.</p>	<p>“Small to medium-sized firms make significant contributions to the economy in the United States, but these firms have only a 40 percent to 50 percent chance of surviving their first five years. These firms are often thought to be entrepreneurial, but small businesses do not necessarily exhibit such characteristics. Instead, an organization’s culture potentially determines its success. Is entrepreneurial orientation the most necessary characteristic for and predictor of success?”</p>
	<p><b>RESULTS:</b> Include a paragraph summarizing the results of the study or research.</p>	<p>“The study offers two important findings. First, in terms of career progression, the stage of a person’s career or life is more important than the generation group to which a person “belongs.” People’s passion stems more from being a wife, a dad, or a member of an ethnic group than from their generational affiliation. Second, Gen X and Gen Y need reassurance that if they work hard, they can and will succeed.”</p>
	<p><b>CONCLUSION:</b> Interpret in one paragraph the results and how they stimulate further inquiry.</p>	<p>“Framing employee development within a generational context is not necessary and can be associated with stigma. This research suggests that Gen X and Gen Y employees need opportunities to develop competencies to master role, life, and career transitions.”</p>
	<p><b>PRACTICAL RELEVANCE:</b> Include a paragraph answering the question: How is this research relevant to practitioners?</p>	<p>“Poor succession planning can lead to the demise of an organization. Given that workers on average change jobs ten times in their career, the pool of potential leaders in the non-profit sector can be broad. Establishing a framework for mentorship, feedback, and observational learning can equip high-potential employees with skills they need to make successful career and life transitions.”</p>
	<p><b>KEYWORDS:</b> Include five to six keywords.</p>	

**Table 3. Methods: Voice of the Scholar**

Section	Guidance	Example of Voice
<p><b>METHODS</b> <b>(~200 words)</b></p> <p>The methods section includes three parts: the research question, a brief description of the method and design, and a description of the research design, as described and illustrated in this table. Each part is written in the scholarly voice.</p>	<p><b>RESEARCH QUESTION:</b> Describe in one or two sentences the what, how, or why question being researched.</p>	<p>“First, I asked to what extent an individual employee learns under different conditions of information overload and ambiguity. After identifying the existence of different learning archetypes, I explored why the effects are so different for similarly trained individuals acting in similar work roles.”</p>
	<p><b>METHOD AND DESIGN:</b> Include a paragraph describing the inquiry method used and the reason for using it.</p>	<p>“This study follows a sequential mixed-methods research design, using first a qualitative study and then a quantitative study, with equal weight given to each. The qualitative portion consisted of coding interview transcripts to elicit interpretations that executives attached to earnings guidance experiences. The quantitative portion operationalized guidance and management constructs, based on the collection of survey data about these constructs, and then used structural equation modeling to evaluate relationships among these variables.”</p>
	<p><b>SAMPLE:</b> Provide a paragraph detailing the sample (qualitative sample) or a paragraph detailing the method used to sample and the sample characteristics (quantitative sample).</p>	<p><i>Qualitative Example:</i> “Interview participants included XX executives from U.S. publicly traded firms between (Month) and (Month) of 20XX. Of these XX executives interviewed, X were analysts who valued equity securities, X were investors who traded in them, and X was an investor relations consultant. A survey was completed between (Month) and (Month) of 20XX by XXX managers who observed how their employers keep accounting records and share financial information with outsiders.”</p> <p><i>Quantitative Example:</i> “Employees who belong to the International Association of XXX were surveyed. The study author is a member of the association and contacted the association’s board. In their daily work, these employees responded to tasks from public safety managers. Employees were tasked with producing knowledge products for their manager. Surveys were sent in late 2012 to all 1,450 members by the association, with a 33% response rate and 364 usable surveys. The survey included questions about the degree to which the employees experienced overload and ambiguity.”</p>

**Table 4. Main Body: Voices of the Practitioner and Scholar**

Section	Guidance	Example of Voice
<p><b>MAIN BODY</b> <b>(~3,000 words)</b></p> <p>The main body consists of five parts that shift between the scholarly and practitioner voices. Each is described in the “Guidance” column, with an example in the “Example” column. Each part must be written in the foregrounded voice, as indicated.</p>	<p><b>PRACTICAL PROBLEM:</b> Use the <i>practitioner voice</i> and offer a detailed description of the problem of practice. The reader should get a visceral feeling for what is at stake for the practitioner.</p>	<p>“Managers at publicly traded companies worry whether reported earnings will fall short of the expectations set by securities analysts who follow the company. Analysts generate and publish earnings estimates, regardless of whether management discloses explicit financial projections. Managers compare consensus (average) estimates with internal projections to decide whether expectations are a cause for concern. If expectations are too high, reported income will fall short and possibly spark a sell-off of the company’s stock. If expectations are too low, reported results will beat the benchmark but influence analysts to ratchet earnings expectations to higher levels, setting the stage for a future earnings miss. Analysts often overestimate profits, so unmanaged expectations bring a risk of earnings misses and sharp stock declines.”</p>
	<p><b>LITERATURE REVIEW:</b> Using the <i>scholarly voice</i>, identify what academia says and knows about the research phenomenon.</p> <p>Focus only on evidence and theoretical positions that are relevant to understanding the problem of practice.</p> <p>Also show gaps or omissions in the current theoretical understanding.</p>	<p>“Scholarly work has not resolved whether firms’ earnings guidance invites earnings management. Following Enron-era scandals, respected practitioners warn that earnings guidance invites dysfunctional levels of earnings management as executives scramble to achieve their previously announced targets. Scholars find widespread evidence of corporate earnings management (Brown &amp; Caylor, 2005; Burgstahler &amp; Dichev, 1997; Burgstahler &amp; Eames, 2006; DeGeorge, Patel, &amp; Zeckhauser, 1999; Graham, Harvey, &amp; Rajgopal, 2005), but no clear relationship between earnings guidance and earnings management activities (Acito, 2011; Brochet, Loumiot, &amp; Serafeim, 2014). The earnings guidance debate can be framed in terms of prospect theory, a branch of behavioral economics that studies how people make choices in the face of risky alternatives. Individuals weigh prospective gains and losses more than final outcomes when making decisions, and losses loom larger than gains in this assessment process (Kahneman &amp; Tversky, 1979). People often make risky choices to avoid probable losses (Kahneman, 2011).”</p>

	<p><b>FINDINGS:</b> Use the <i>practitioner voice</i> to organize findings into the three to five big ideas that speak to the practitioner.</p> <p>If technical data are needed, provide it in an appendix rather than including in the body of the article.</p> <p>The findings section is written in the practitioner voice to provide practitioner thought leaders with a concise and tractable understanding of the importance of the findings. Thought leaders seek writing not only in a form that they can understand, but also in a form that they can use for reinterpretation and exploitation in their organization.</p>	<p><i>Quantitative Example:</i> “Executives worry about their loss of credibility if their earnings predictions prove to be inaccurate, but analysis of survey data suggests that earnings guidance actually decreases the likelihood of managers’ structuring business transactions or modifying asset or liability valuations to alter the amount of income reported by the organization in an accounting period – a finding consistent with the scholarly articles previously cited. Perhaps in this case the use of earnings guidance limits runaway analyst earnings expectations and mitigates the need for earnings management. However, earnings guidance given in the context of an active investor relations program is associated with an elevated likelihood of real earnings management. More formally, the combination of a high degree of earnings guidance and an active investor relations program is positively associated with a perceived likelihood of engaging in real earnings management.”</p> <p><i>Qualitative Example:</i> “Guiding executives fear credibility loss when they report financial results that differ significantly from their guidance forecasts. Credibility means that investors perceive managers to be competent and trustworthy. Evidence of credibility is the ability to say that we did what we said we were going to do. Study participants brought up concerns about developing or losing credibility when making guidance decisions. A CFO at a firm that provides guidance worried about the consequence of missing guided estimates:</p> <p><i>‘There’s only one executive that really has to have that credibility and that’s our chairman and CEO. Everybody else, including me, is basically secondary. But if he lost credibility, then the outside-in view of the future of the company would be damaged. It would be very hard to get back.’ (Respondent, Firm #12)”</i></p>
	<p><b>LESSONS FOR PRACTICE:</b> Using the <i>practitioner voice</i>, write concrete suggestions using active verbs to describe what managers should do or not do, given the <b>findings</b>.</p>	<p>“Management should focus development training on competencies needed for career- or life-stage transitions. Instead of framing employee development using a generational framework, which can be associated with stigmas, focus development activities on competences that help employees to understand and prepare for role and career transitions. This approach reinforces employee expectations that careers evolve and require preparation to be successful. The development of the training should include the perspectives of new entrants and mid- and late-career workers. This approach recognizes that employees might enter into a new career later in life and facilitates a path forward for workers who might be cast in roles where the subordinate is decades older than the manager. Finally, by not singling out “problem(s)” associated with a particular generation group, organizations can avoid creating or strengthening age-based bias in the workplace.”</p>
	<p><b>CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY:</b> Use the <i>scholarly voice</i> to discuss two to three ways the research adds to, confirms, or changes theoretical understandings of a phenomenon.</p>	<p>“We considered Daft and Huber’s (1987) theorizing of the effects from overload and equivocality, in which they recommend four types of organizational learning to overcome the four effects of overload and equivocality on organizations writ large. Daft and Huber (1987) theorize that in the most dangerous condition, where both high overload and high ambiguity exist, learning requires the reduction of overload and equivocality. However, the literature has not provided a strategy on how to achieve the reductions. Our evidence-based study concluded that in this most dangerous condition, overload must be reduced first. Our empirical study showed that overload confounds ambiguity, thereby hiding the sources and effects of equivocality. Therefore, reducing overload first reveals equivocality so that it can be understood and reduced. Sequencing is incredibly important.” (This example comes from Wolfberg (2017).)</p>

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